

## A Tale of Two Veterans.<sup>11th</sup>

Two Veterans were patients at Dallas Regional VA hospital in spring of 2018. We will call them Vet1 and Vet2. **Vet1** is roughly 15 years older than Vet2; different wars, different eras. Vet1, 40 years ago, wrote off the VA as a horrible warning in Toto swearing that he would die before ever going back to that sh\*t hole.. He set out and succeeded in the world notwithstanding many service related diseases, all denied by government, that he learned to cope with until they erupted decades later into a deadly emergency, which nearly killed him. By all rights they should have, proper. However, it takes a lot of dying to kill a man. Moreover, nobody leaves here without owner permission. *He obeyed the rules: paid and still pays taxes, raised and lost a family, stayed clean, sober and out of trouble, finished a career, education, honorably discharged his Military obligation, voted in nearly every election, served jury duty and other civic obligations many times, successfully raised a wife, her mother and child, took care of aging parents and less fortunate family members, friends, neighbors and much, much more. He has never been unemployed since age 9; became a tax paying wage slave at 13; before that he was just a slave, and has never drawn unemployment or disability of any kind until at age 64, when VA finally awarded him 10% disability for an injury denied over 40 years ago. He did all the 'right' things American society and culture demanded of him in return for the right to live in them.* However, destiny forced him literally dying back under VA care, which landed him in Dallas Regional hospital by way of a local civilian hospital, which first had to stabilize his condition enough for transport, which was his first visit to VA regional in over 40 years since Military discharge. The service related diseases were now taking a deadly toll. After over four decades, he finally received 10% rating and a monthly stipend of 140.00 dollars for a disability denied in 1980. He used that with additional monies to purchase health insurance, costing over eight thousand dollars in premiums a year and rising, which he currently uses to pay for all VA health clinic appointments. VA care gets even more expensive when adding 6 of his best years of life drafted into doing military time and almost 55 years of paying US income and other taxes that fund government and institutions suchlike VA. He will continue paying US taxes and through service related illnesses for the remainder of his life. Another Vet collecting 100% disability and thousands of tax-free dollars and other benefits each month, and who is expert at playing the disability game using *different* rules taught to him by different teachers, called Vet1 a fool for paying VA with his health insurance. Perhaps the man is correct. Vet1 did what was right by guidelines taught to him; but it seems no good deed goes unpunished, when dealing with government. Vet1 in fighting to recover from illness is tired, spent and really would rather just throw the fight, TKO and check out of this hellhole. For some reason fate forbids that until he completes unfinished business. Therefore, Vet1 struggles to recover, copes while paying dues and killing time until it finally kills him. The government -VA treats him punitively, mostly, as a cash cow providing to the firm a maximum return of investment in exchange for minimum outlay: his reward – ‘it thanks him for his service.’ Party smile ☺

**Vet2**, is 51 and gets 3000.00 dollars a month @ 100% disability rating and far more from Veterans Administration. He got this award over 25 years ago shortly after discharge in his late 20's. He, too, plays the game by *different* rules. He is physically healthy and hale, lives with a girl friend in a classic dependent, co-dependent relationship, and drinks away his monthly disability check. When it runs out, Vet2 arranges to get admitted into Dallas Regional VA hospital for the equivalent of government sponsored Betty Ford rehab until his next government check arrives. Then he manages a release to go on another drinking binge until it runs out, and ditto. He is a regular; staff nurses know him by first name and vise versa. Constant streams of hospital medical personnel lecture him on his alcoholism. He is affable, promises to do better, etc. When they propose VA or AA rehab, he promises to try harder, has heard about them, and other well rehearsed excuses. He is very good at melodrama, and is well versed in stall and brier-patch diversion to deflect all attempts at getting him into an earnest recovery program. Vet2’s sob stories include: his girlfriend beat him up, life let him down, his girlfriend and parents are mean to him, this reason or that reason, bad luck, car problems, my family hates me, poor little me, ad nauseam. During his stay, hospital staff pampers him like a little prince; nurses shower him with attention, extra care, snacks, ad infinitum. VA enables and totally supports his chronic alcoholic dependency, self-destruction and has done so for decades. These are his historical accounts to and observations by Vet1: his story. VA enables him to use resources that could be better spent on very sick Vets waiting for hospital beds chronically in short supply. Tending a few hangovers at home might just be the best thing for him as incentive to sobriety. His mean girlfriend and parents might just be trying to help him through tough love. Vet1 needs the help but is punished for making gains, pulling his weight, while still paying his dues to society in return for slogans such as ‘thank you for your service.’ Government handsomely rewards Vet2 for doing the opposite.

**What is skewed about the aforewritten Socialistic medical scenario?**